11
Conclusions

11.1. Strandings

Most of the strandings occurred on 12 and 13 May 1996. The strandings coincided in time and location with the SWAC research runs 9 and 10 (12 May) and with run 13 and 14 (13 May), as well as with earthquakes that occurred on 12 May, 1996.

11.2. Presence of Odontocetes

During the SWAC research run 9 on 12 May 1996 there was - after 5 min - a positive detection of sperm whales at distances of 3 km or greater from the acoustic source. Signals from other odontocetes were also detected at indeterminate distances. The recording system did not function correctly for 5 min directly after the start of the run. Consequently, the presence of odontocetes at distances less than 3 km at the moment the SWAC research started cannot be excluded. It was not possible to acoustically determine the presence or absence of ziphiids in the area because of insufficient information about the sound production characteristics of this group. During other runs odontocetes were heard at large distances.

11.3. Influence of SWAC Sound

No apparent short-term changes were observed in the behaviour of sperm whales beyond a 3 km radius of the SWAC source based on acoustic records available.

11.4. Causes for the strandings

The Bioacoustic Panel of National Experts has provided its expert opinion on the connection, if any, between the NATO Shallow Water Acoustic Classification (SWAC) research in the Kyparissiakos Gulf in May 1996, and the strandings of Cuvier's beaked whales that occurred in the same general time and area, and to provide advice as to the event. Their opinion is summarized in Section 1.

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